Collage & Photomontage

Intro to Dada and Surrealism ~45 minutes

By Noormah Jamal, CMA Artist in Residence, 2023-24
In collaboration with 5th graders at Children's Workshop School, NYC.



Hannah Höch, *Over the Water*, 1943 - 1946, collage of paper and offset prints,
© 2018 Hannah Höch / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2018 / Courtesy Kicken Berlin

Generations of creators have made new works by combining old images in new ways. Many students may have encountered **collage** at some point by incident or in school - the artistic practice of **cutting** and **affixing paper, news clippings,** or **photographs** onto a larger surface to create a new image. This practice has the potential to carry tremendous **narrative** or **storytelling** power. For this class, students will look at the practice of collage in the **Dada art movement** and what made it different from other artistic movements.

Dada was an international movement that rejected traditional order and modes of expression in favor of spontaneity, randomness, and even humor. While it may appear

visually playful, Dada emerged from the brutality of war and the desire to make sense of a new world. **Hannah Höch** was a pioneer of photomontage and **collage**. She masterfully combined elements from different sources to make bold and often political statements.

This lesson aims to introduce the concept of **visual harmony** on a page. Students can share their definitions by arranging the cut-up magazine pieces and gluing them to a surface to make a new **composition.**

Learning Objectives:

+ Develop fine motor skills with cutting and pasting.
+ Share the magazines.
+ Appreciation of the Elements of Art: **shape, color, line, space**.
+ Appreciation of the Principles of Art: **composition, emphasis, proportion**.
+ Students should think actively about the 'space' on their paper and make active decisions around placement.

Materials:

- Mixed media paper
- Glue stick
- Scissors
- Magazines

Looking at Examples of Collage + Photomontage

Raoul Hausmann (Austrian, b. 1886– d. 1971), *A Bourgeois Precision Brain Incites a World Movement, also known as Dada siegt (Dada Triumphs)*, 1920, photomontage and collage with watercolor on paper, Private Collection © 2019 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris. (LINK)

Hannah Höch (German, b.1889–d.1978) *Indian Dancer: From an Ethnographic Museum (Indische Tänzerin: Aus einem ethnographischen Museum)* 1930, MoMA, NYC. (LINK)

Step 1: Look at examples of collage + photomontage

It's tempting to go directly to the material but a meaningful encounter with historical examples can spark imagination and exploration. Look closely at Hannah Höch' *Over the Water* (1943), and discuss how disparate elements come together in new ways: a baby's mouth crying, a sculpted nose and brows, and comically positioned eyes come together to form an expressive face.

Step 2: Introduction to materials

This project can be executed independently or collaboratively. Depending on the age group of the children you may want to provide some pre-cut shapes or pages, stacks of magazines can become an overwhelming process. Promote sharing. Consider other visual resources like the New York Picture Collection at the New York Public Library.

Step 3: Consideration of the page

White space on a page is not just a blank page. Help students think about how the white of the page interacts with the forms and can affect the contrast, brightness, and even emotional drama of the interacting forms.

Step 4: Sharing our stories

Collage carries tremendous narrative and storytelling potential. As we share our creations, ask the children to share their decision making and the stories they constructed.

While making your work, consider the following:

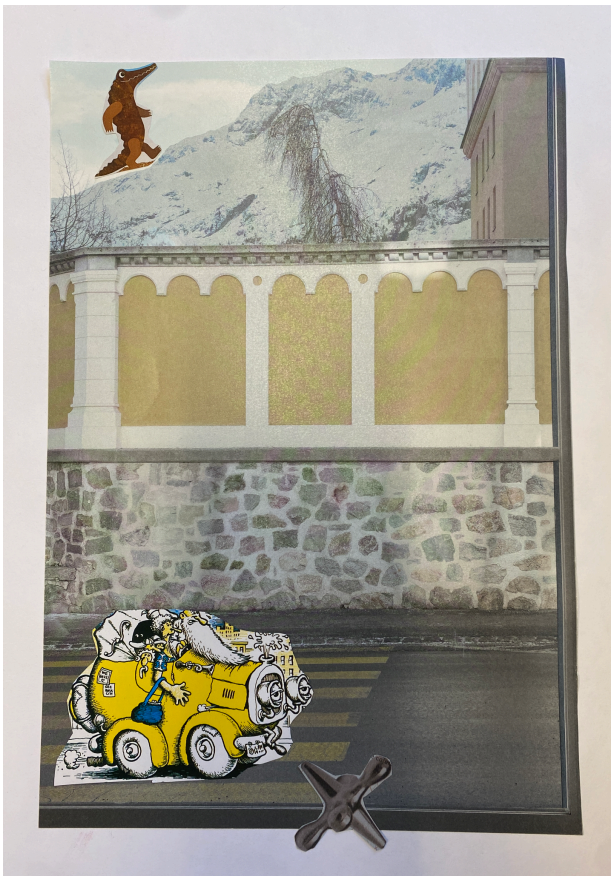
- Does my artwork make a statement? What am I trying to say?
- How can I make combinations of old images new and surprising?
- Can art be silly and playful?
- Does my new image tell a story?

Instructor Notes:

It's easy for this project to become a "mood board" - which is to say many favorite images are placed on a page without much consideration. Challenge students to create relationships between the cut corms and on the page. For my session, I organized this as a group assignment so they had to share their magazines and make decisions together. Some disagreements were expected as more than one child wanted the same image to cut or use.

Examples of student work:





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